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DISSEMINATION, MARKETING AND USE OF GENDER STATISTICS

Selected gender indicators: Comparing Switzerland with other countries\*

Submitted by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office

ABSTRACT

1. In a globalized world, producing internationally comparable indicators has become increasingly important. Thanks to the UNECE's Gender Statistics Database, we now have a database of indicators specifically designed to measure whether gender equality is being achieved in Switzerland, the EU and other countries. In this article, we shall present a set of indicators concerning one area of life: employment and income. Comparisons are then drawn between Switzerland and other countries to show what position women hold in this field. For one thing, such comparisons provide us with a benchmark that can be used to assess realities in

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\* This paper has been prepared at the invitation of the secretariat.

Switzerland. At the same time, they enable us to identify the methodological and analytical hurdles that need to be overcome so that data from various countries are comparable.

## I. BASIC SITUATION

2. After a protracted development and construction phase, the UNECE Gender Statistics Database has become operational in the course of this year. It is available for use on-line on the Web to those interested in it. In addition to the growing importance of international comparisons in our globalised society, this was reason enough to make an initial attempt to compare the status of various countries in gender matters with the help of indicators. This contribution should be understood as a work in progress because various methodological problems still have to be discussed and clarified, and the Work Session on Gender Statistics offers a good opportunity to do so. A revised and expanded version of this contribution will be published in 2007 by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office.

3. Alongside considerations of content, the selection of the indicators for comparison is also strongly guided by pragmatic decisions in this contribution. The most important criteria are:

- the indicator's relevance in respect of gender equality issues
- availability of the indicator for Switzerland
- the availability of current data, primarily for Switzerland and secondly for the other countries

4. This also raises two central problems in connection with the Database which I will address in a critical appreciation at the end of this contribution, namely indicator availability for the various countries and the need for current data.

5. However, first we will take a look at the comparison of a few selected data for Switzerland with those of other countries. In this first step on the way to a publication, we will confine ourselves to the area of economic activity as an example.

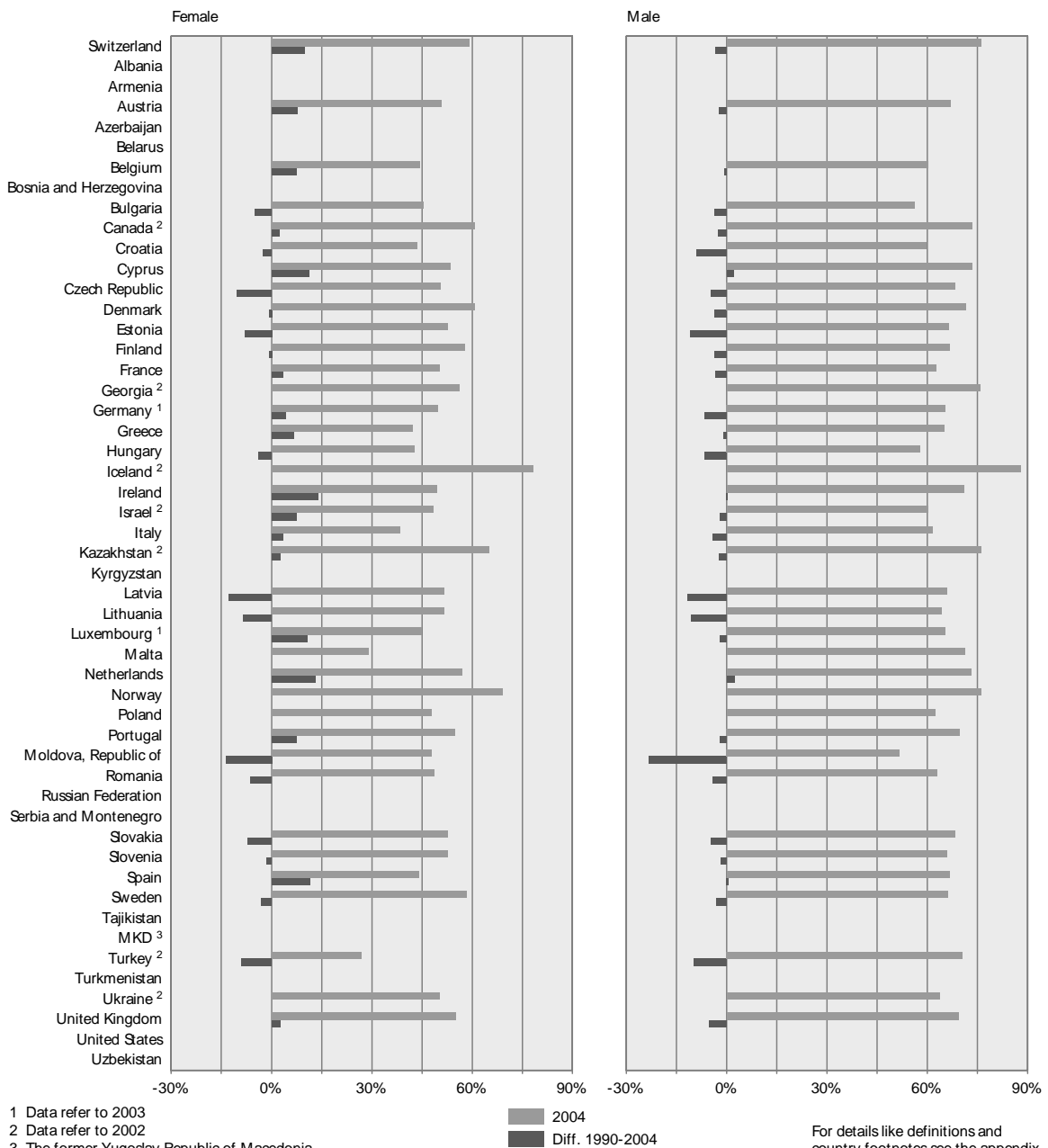
## II. ECONOMIC ACTIVITY OF WOMEN AND MEN

### *Economic activity rate*

6. It is common knowledge that in Switzerland, the participation of women in the labour market is relatively high, and this is confirmed by the data available in the UNECE Gender Statistics Database. In 2004, the economic activity rate of women aged 15 and over in Switzerland was 59.1%, while the figure for men was considerably higher at 76%. In comparison with its neighbours – Austria, Germany, France and Italy – Switzerland has the highest economic activity rate for women. Compared with international figures, the increase in the percentage of

Labour force: economic activity rate for women and men aged 15+  
2004 and change 1990-2004

G 1



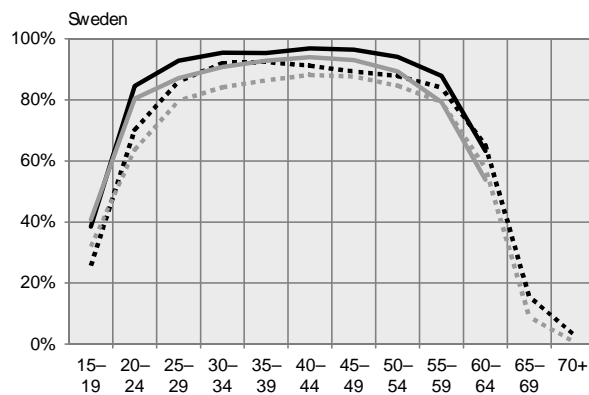
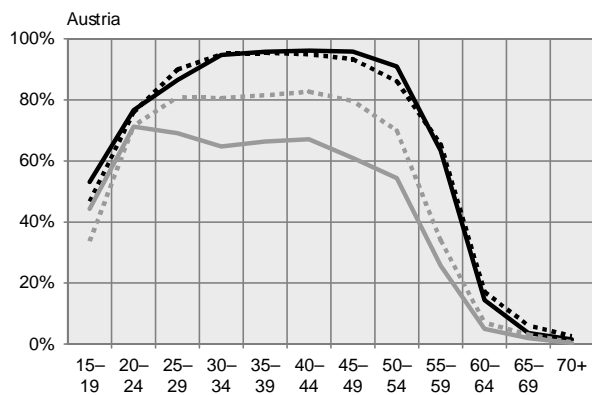
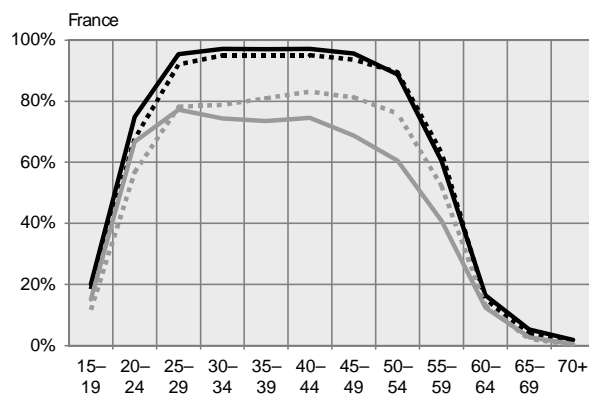
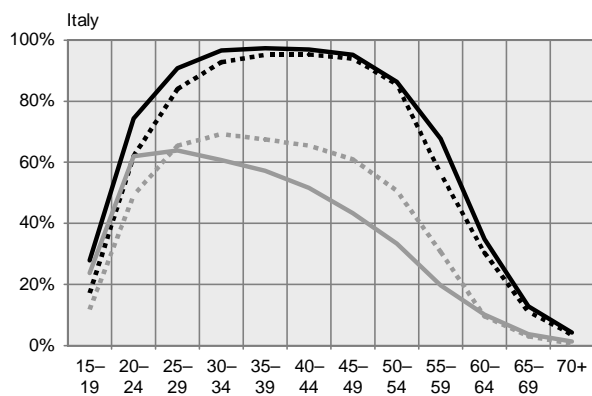
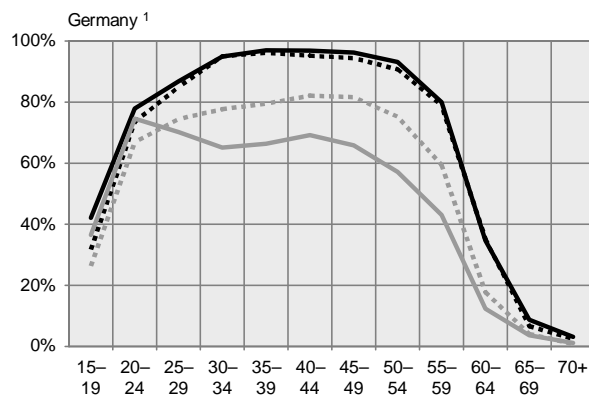
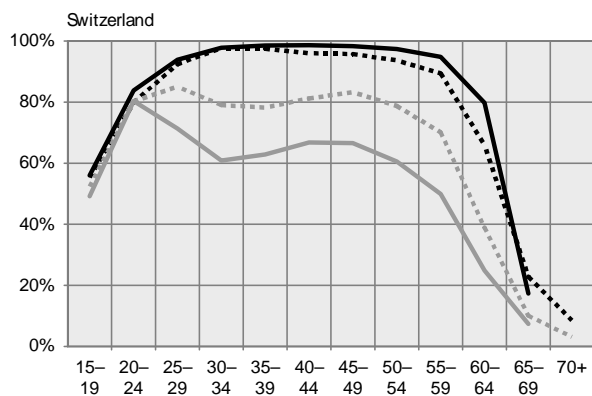
Source: UNECE Statistical Division Database, compiled from national and international (EUROSTAT and ILO) official sources.  
Data come from Labour Force Surveys or Population Censuses.

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economically active women is also remarkable: since 1990, it has risen by just under 10%. Only Luxemburg, Cyprus, Spain, the Netherlands and Ireland registered a higher increase. Men in Switzerland too have a comparatively high percentage participation in economic activity, though since 1990, it has fallen from 79.3% to 76%. The economic activity rate for men fell in most of the countries under review, and with a drop of 3.3%, Switzerland is in the middle group.

**Labour force: economic activity rate for women and men aged 15+ by age groups**  
1990 and 2004

G 2



Female: — 1990  
..... 2004

Male: — 1990  
..... 2004

1 Data refer to 2003

For details like definitions and country footnotes see the appendix.

Source: UNECE Statistical Division Database, compiled from national and international (EUROSTAT and ILO) official sources. Data come from Labour Force Surveys or Population Censuses.

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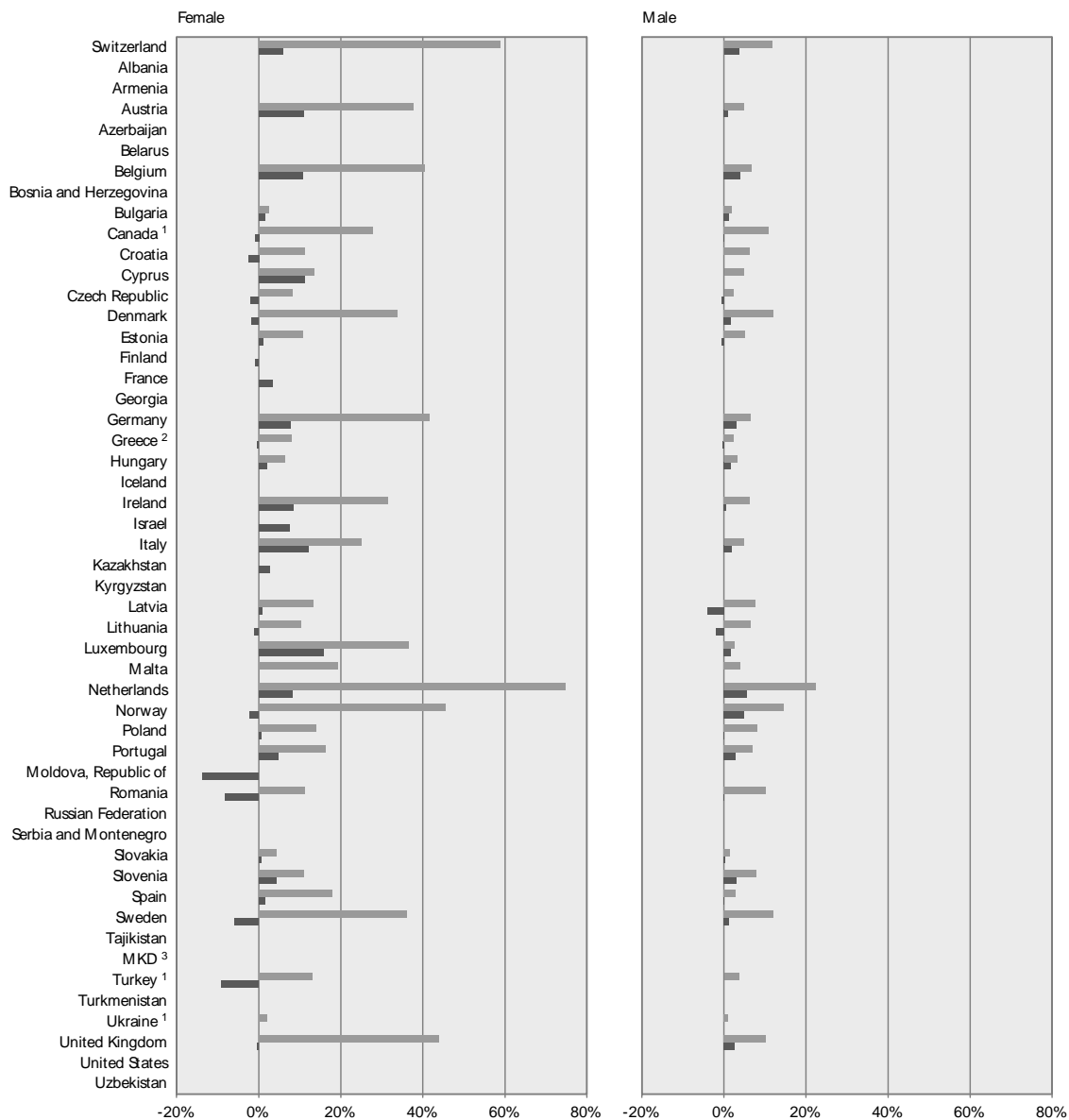
7. In Switzerland, the progression of the economic activity rate of women by age group is very different from that of men who register steady economic participation at the high level of at least 97% between the ages of 30 and 60. In other words, almost all men aged 30 to 60 are in employment or unemployed, i.e. looking for work. In the neighbouring countries – Austria, Germany, France and Italy – this consistently high level of economic participation of men is also evident, but in some countries, the decrease begins earlier. This is the case, for instance, in Italy where it begins as early as between 50 and 55. Moreover, in these countries, there is no marked change in the male economic activity rate by age groups between 1990 and 2004. In contrast, the economic activity rate picture for women is completely different. In Switzerland, there is a noticeable decline in the rate for women between 30 and 40 due to maternity and the tasks associated with it. In 1990, there was still a clear drop in the 30-34 age group, but in 2004, the fall in the female economic activity rate is no longer as marked as in 1990, though it is still obvious. In the same year, the trend in Germany, France, Italy and Austria is not the same as for Switzerland. In the former countries, women do not withdraw from the labour market during the period when they are founding a family although, as in Switzerland, they generally have a lower economic activity rate than men. Among the countries mentioned, the difference between the female and male economic activity rates is greatest in Italy. The picture in Sweden is different again. There, the progression of the economic activity rate by age reveals virtually no differences between men and women, because the women have the same consistently high economic participation rate as men. In a nutshell, it can be said that women in Switzerland withdraw from the labour market for a few years because of family obligations more frequently than their counterparts in neighbouring countries. There may be various reasons for this, last but not least the shortage of child-care facilities and, in general, the poorer conditions for combining professional and family life, which are partly related to social attitudes.

#### *Part-time work*

8. Extensive part-time work is one important reason for the high economic activity rate of women in Switzerland. After the Netherlands, Switzerland had far and away the highest percentage of women working part time (58.8%) among the countries under consideration in 2004. In all the countries, the percentage of men working part time was much lower. In Switzerland, 11.8% of men in employment work part time, putting Switzerland in the group of countries with the most men working part time, though with a smaller difference to the 22.3% of men working part time. With a few exceptions, the ten-year development from 1995 to 2004 indicates a general increase in part-time work which is more pronounced among women than among men. This can be interpreted as a positive sign for better reconciliation of professional and private life, though this does not mean that the spread of part-time work has only positive repercussions.

**Part-time employed as percent of all employed  
2004 and change 1995-2004**

G 3



1 2004: data refer to 2002

2 2004: data refer to 2003

3 The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

■ 2004  
■ Diff. 1995-2004

For details like definitions and country footnotes see the appendix.

Source: NEECE Statistical Division Database, compiled from national and international (EUROSTAT and ILO) official sources.  
Data come from Labour Force Surveys or Population Censuses.

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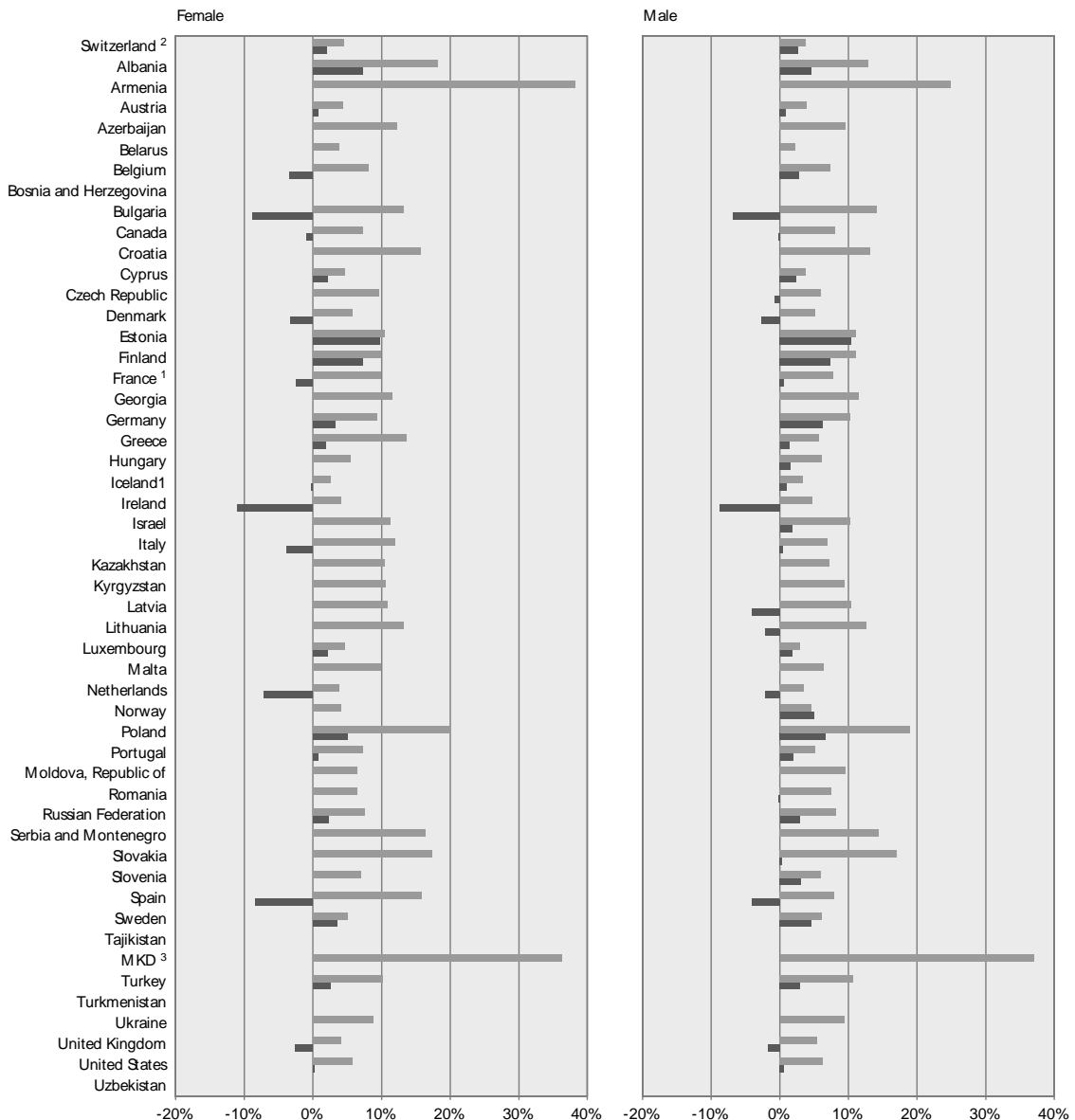
*Unemployment rate*

9. Great prudence is called for in comparing unemployment rates because the reasons for the differences, which exist between the countries, are often of a methodological nature. The example quoted by Margaret Maruani in her book *Les mécomptes du chômage* (Paris, Bayard, 2002) illustrates the methodological problems involved in internationally comparable – or rather non-comparable – indicators, which give a distorted picture of the situation. In contrast to most

countries, the United Kingdom has a lower unemployment rate for women than for men. Scrutiny of this result reveals that the conditions for granting unemployment benefit are extremely restrictive – in other words, the unemployed must be prepared to immediately accept a job offer. This is a problem, particularly for mothers who cannot organize childcare in a matter of hours or days. Thus, British unemployment statistics exclude all women who cannot make themselves available for work immediately for family reasons.

**Unemployment rate for women and men aged 15+  
2003 and change 1990-2003**

**G 4**



1 2003: data refer to 2002  
 2 1990: data refer to 1991  
 3 The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

2003  
 Diff. 1990-2003

For details like definitions and country footnotes see the appendix.

10. Consequently, Switzerland's low unemployment rates (compared with those of other countries) for both women and men (2003: 4.5% and 3.8% respectively) are not addressed in detail in this contribution, as this would require further clarification. The same applies to the long-term unemployment rate. At 31.5% of all unemployed women, the figure for Switzerland is in the middle group of the considered countries, while that for men (21%) places Switzerland in the third of countries with lower percentages.

#### *Gender pay gap*

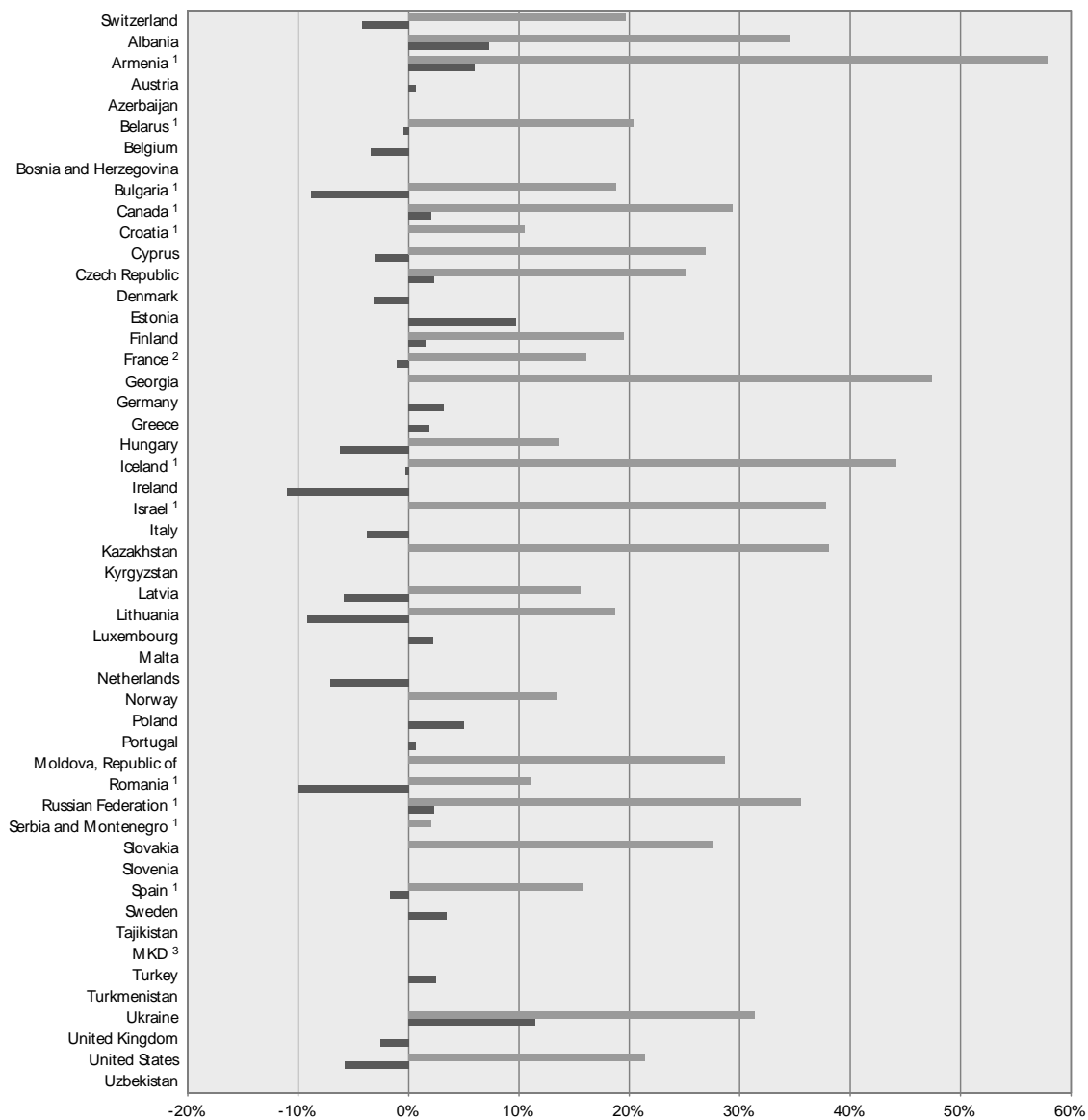
11. As was to be expected, comparison of wage differences shows that, in all countries, women earn less than men. There are various obviously explainable reasons for this: education, age, seniority, branch of the economy, job requirements etc. However, part of the pay gap is due to discrimination. Last year, a second study conducted in Switzerland on the basis of the Swiss Earnings Structure Survey for 1998 to 2002 revealed that 60% of the differences were due to objective factors like those mentioned above. Consequently, the remaining 40% are attributable to wage discrimination.

12. In 2004, women in Switzerland earned 19.7% less than men. This difference puts Switzerland in the middle group of countries investigated. The differences in wages range from just 2.1% in Serbia and Montenegro (is that possible?) to 57.9% in Armenia. Of the neighbouring countries, only France and Germany provided data. In France, women earned 16.1% less than men in 2002, while in Germany the difference in 2001 was 22.4%. In most of the countries where comparisons with the past are possible, the pay gap has shrunk since 1995, but the size of the decrease varies by 10 percentage points at most. In the decade between 1994 and 2004, the pay gap in Switzerland fell by 4.2 percent, a slow but steady decrease. In a few countries, however, the opposite trend is the case: in Finland, Canada, the Czech Republic, Armenia and Ukraine, the pay gap between women and men widened to the disadvantage of women. Cross comparisons of various labour and economic indicators and a precise knowledge of the actual situation in the respective countries are necessary to be able to interpret such conflicting results. However, this means that a large number of complete data have to be available. We will therefore now move on to the next section, which touches briefly on the problems and difficulties of international comparisons.



**Gender pay gap**  
2004 and change 1995-2004

G 5



1 2004: data refer to 2003  
2 2004: data refer to 2002  
3 The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

2004  
Diff. 1995-2004

For details like definitions and country footnotes see the appendix.

### III. COMMENTS ON AND CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE USE OF THE DATABASE

13. Making international comparisons with statistical data is no easy undertaking. The following problem areas emerged from initial experience with using the UNECE Gender Statistics Database for this contribution, which is to be expanded and further developed in future.

14. One of the key prerequisites for a statistical database for actual use is the availability of current data. If the data are not updated regularly – ideally, annually – the database will lose its value and will no longer serve its intended purpose. The UNECE Gender Statistics Database is up to date in some areas, such as public life & decision making (data for 2005), and out of date in others, such as education (2003 data, except in a few cases, data for 2004). Therefore, the problem of the frequency and mode of data supply by the countries still has to be resolved. It is also important for the UNECE to have sufficient resources for database maintenance.

15. The validation and interpretation of data are closely linked. In the event of strange or deviating figures, the question arises of whether they are caused by a methodological problem and if not, of how they are to be interpreted. The numerous footnotes about specific features in connection with the figures for the various countries always have to be taken into account because they are expedient and indispensable. However, they complicate work with and interpretation of the data. In addition to a purely descriptive commentary of the data, a comparative interpretation of the differences and the points in common would be desirable. As has already been said, this requires a sound knowledge of the situation in the particular country as well as the possibility of being able to combine several indicators so as to identify cross-links with a view to a possible explanation.

16. The representation of indicators for country comparisons is a methodological problem of a more technical nature. What types of graphs provide the best way of representing as many countries and as much information as possible while remaining readable and intelligible for specific groups of users?

17. Despite the difficulties mentioned, I think that the UNECE Gender Statistics Database is a very useful and important tool for a wide circle of users. It is worth investing further resources in it, and as Gender Statistics Focal Point, I will be stepping up my commitment in future with a view to achieving a good-quality database.

### IV. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

18. In the coming months, this contribution will be expanded and revised. Certain areas for which comparative national indicators are available will be added, while suggestions about content and methodology received from participants at the UNECE Work Session as well as at the Swiss Statistics Meeting will be taken into account wherever possible. The revised version will be published by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office in 2007, and a selection of indicators will be incorporated into the set of regularly updated gender equality indicators for publication on Switzerland's statistics portal, thus enhancing it with an international comparison of selected data.

## APPENDIX

**Charts G1 and G2***Definition*

The *labour force/economically active population* comprises all persons who fulfill the requirements for inclusion among the employed and the unemployed.

*Employment*: The employed comprise all persons above a specified age who during a specified brief period, either one week or one day, were in the following categories: (a) - paid employment: (a1) - at work: persons who during the reference period performed some work for wage or salary, in cash or in kind; (a2) - with a job but not at work: persons who, having already worked in their present job, were temporarily not at work during the reference period and had a formal attachment to their job. (b) - self-employment: (b1) - at work: persons who during the reference period performed some work for profit or family gain, in cash or in kind; (b2) - with an enterprise but not at work: persons with an enterprise, which may be a business enterprise, a farm or a service undertaking, who were temporarily not at work during the reference period for any specific reason.

*Unemployment*: The unemployed comprise all persons above a specific age who during the reference period were: (a) - without work - i.e. were not in paid employment or self-employment; and (b) - currently available for work - i.e. were available for paid employment or self-employment during the reference period; and (c) - seeking work - i.e. had taken specific steps in a specified reference period to seek paid employment or self-employment.

*Activity rate* is the share of the population aged 15 and above who supply, or are available to supply, labour for the production of goods and services.

*Country footnotes*

Albania: data for other years refer to official estimates.

Armenia: data refer to official estimates, and refer to 16-63.

Austria: 1990: national definition. Break in series: since 1995, labour force data are based on ILO/EUROSTAT concepts; before 1995, the Life Subsistence Concept was used.

Azerbaijan: 1990: data refer to 1989. 2004: data refer to official estimates.

Belarus: 1990: data refer to 1989. 2004: data refer to official estimates.

Bulgaria: 1990: data refer to 1993.

Canada: 1990: data in age group 25-29 refer to age group 25-34; data in age group 35-39 refer to age group 35-44; data in age group 45-54, refer to age group 45-54; data in age group 55-59, refer to age group 55-65. 2004: data in age group 65-69, refer to age group 65+.

Croatia: 1990: data refer to 1991.

Cyprus: data refer to the Government controlled area. 1990: data refer to 1992.

Czech Republic: 1990: data refer to 1991

Estonia: 1990: population aged 15-69; 2004: population aged 15-74.

Finland: Data refer to 15-74.

Iceland: 1990: data refer to 1991. Data refer to population aged 16-74.

Israel: 1990, 2002: data in age group 15-19, refer to age group 15-17; data in age group 20-24, refer to age group 18-24; data in age group 25-29, refer to age group 25-34; data in age group 35-39, refer to age group 35-44; data in age group 45-49, refer to age group 45-54.

Italy: Break in series: change in methodology: at present, Italian LFS time series are homogeneous starting from October 1992. On that date LFS has undergone relevant methodological changes: 1) in definitions a) the active population now includes persons 15 years and over (previously it was 14 and over); b) unemployment now includes persons who actively sought employment in the last 30 days (previously it was in the last 6 months); 2) in checking procedure; 3) in sample stratification.

Kazakhstan: 1990: data refer to 1989.

Kyrgyzstan: 1990: data refer to 1989.

Latvia: 1990: data refer to 1989. Break in series: adjustment of population figures based on the results of the 2000 census and recalculation of labour force data.

Lithuania: 1990: data refer population census of 1989.

Malta: 1990: official estimates. 2004: data in age group 60-64, refer to age group 60+.

Moldova, Republic of: 1990: data refer to 1989. 2004: Data in age group 65-69 refer to age group 65+. Geographical coverage: the Transnistria region and the town of Tighina are not covered since 1997.

Poland: 1990: data refer to 1992

Romania: 1990: official estimates from administrative data.

Russian Federation: 1990: data refer to 1989. 2004: data in age group 65-69, refer to age group 65-72.

Serbia and Montenegro: Geographical coverage: Kosovo and Metohia are not covered from 2000 onwards. 2004: Data refer to October.

Slovakia: Conscripts in compulsory military service are included in the labour force, but not in employment. Break in series: before 2000, conscripts in compulsory military service were excluded from the labour force.

Slovenia: 1990: data refer to 1991

Sweden: Data refer to 16+; from 1990 data refer to 16-64. Age group 15-19 refers to 16-19.

Turkey: 1990 refer to age group 12+. 2004: Data in age group 65-69 refer to age group 65+.

Ukraine: 1990: data refer to 1989. Data in age group 15-19 refer to age group 10-19. 2002: data in age group 65-69 refer to age group 65-70.

United States: data refer to age group 16+.

### **Chart G3**

#### *Definition*

Part-time employed persons usually perform paid work for less than 30 hours per week.

#### *Country footnotes*

Armenia: 1995: data refer to 1997.

Belgium: Break in series: until 2000 employees only, from 2001 all status of employment.

Bulgaria: Up to 2000 as part-time employed are considered persons usually performing paid work less than 30 hours per week; since 2001 according to persons self-perception.

Cyprus: 1990: data refer to the Government controlled area only.

Latvia: 1995: data refer to 1996.

Lithuania: 1995: data refer to 1997.

**Chart G4***Definition*

Unemployment: The unemployed comprise all persons above a specific age who during the reference period were: (a) without work - i.e. were not in paid employment or self-employment; and (b) currently available for work - i.e. were available for paid employment or self-employment during the reference period; and (c) seeking work - i.e. had taken specific steps in a specified reference period to seek paid employment or self-employment. The unemployment rate is calculated by relating the number of workers who are unemployed during the reference period to the labour force at the same date.

*Country footnotes*

Albania: data refer to registered unemployment, end of the year.

Armenia: data refer to registered unemployment, end of the year.

Austria: 1990: national definition. Break in series: since 1995, labour force data are based on ILO/EUROSTAT concepts; before 1995, the Life Subsistence Concept was used.

Belarus: data refer to registered unemployment, end of year. Data refer to population aged 16+.

Azerbaijan: 1990: data refer to 1991. Data refer to registered unemployment.

Bulgaria: 1990: data refer to 1993

Cyprus: data refer to the Government controlled area only. Break in series: 2000: change in methodology.

Finland: data refer to 15-74.

Hungary: 1990: data refer to 1992.

Italy: break in series: change in methodology: at present, Italian LFS time series are homogeneous starting from October 1992. On that date LFS has undergone relevant methodological changes: 1) in definitions a) the active population now includes persons 15 years and over (previously it was 14 and over); b) unemployment now includes persons who actively sought employment in the last 30 days (previously it was in the last 6 months); 2) in checking procedure; 3) in sample stratification.

Kyrgyzstan: data refer to registered unemployment, end of year.

Moldova, Republic of: Geographical coverage: Whole country with the exception of the Transnistria region and the town of Tighina

Poland: 1990: data refer to 1992

Russian Federation: 1990: data refer to 1992. Data refer to persons aged 15-72.

Sweden: data refer to 16+. Break in series: 2000: change in methodology.

Switzerland: 1990: data refer to 1991.

United Kingdom: data refer to 16+.

United States: data refer to population aged 16+.

**Chart G5***Definition*

Gender pay gap is the difference between average monthly earnings of male employees and of female employees as a percentage of average monthly earnings of male employees. Average

gross monthly earnings refer to remuneration, usually in cash, paid to full time employees; it should be equivalent to the gross remuneration.

*Country footnotes*

Austria: 1995: data refer to 1996.

Belarus: data refer to December of each year. Collection method: enterprises-based data (non-state enterprises are excluded).

Czech Republic: 1995: data refer to 1996.

Kyrgyzstan: Data refer to November of each year. Collection method: enterprise-based data.

Lithuania: 1995: data refer to January.

Norway: reference period III quarter of each year. Data includes variable additional allowances, bonuses, commissions. Not including payment for overtime work.

Slovenia: 1995: data refer to 1996.

Armenia: 1995: data refer to 1997.

Bulgaria: data refer to employees under labour contract.

Croatia: data exclude employees in craft and trade.

Cyprus: data includes family allowances and the value of payments in kind.

Hungary: data refer to enterprises with 5 or more employees. 1995: enterprises with more than 20 employees.

Iceland: data refer to average income from employment.

Latvia: 1995: data refer to I quarter of 1996. Data refer to I quarter of each year.

Netherlands: Overtime payments are excluded. 1995: data refer to December.

Moldova, Republic of : data refer to September. Enterprises with 20 people and more.

Romania: The average gross wage and salary contains the total remuneration in cash and in kind. Data refer to October of each year.

Serbia and Montenegro: Data refer to Serbia only.

Spain: Data refer to net income amounts.

Tajikistan: 1995: data refer to 1996. Data refer to December of each year.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: data refer to net payments.

United States: Data refer to median usual weekly earnings.

Switzerland: 1995: data refer to 1994. Data refer to October of each year. Earnings components: basic gross salary, allowances for Sunday, night or shift work, 1/12 of 13th salary and 1/12 of annual irregular payments.

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